BRIEF
DIRECTIONS
TO A
Young Scholar
Deſigning the MINISTRY,
FOR THE
Study of Divinity.

By the Reverend and Learned

Samuel Willard, M. A.

Late Paſtor of the South-Church in *Boſton*, and Vice-Preſident of *Harvard-College* in *Cambridge* in *New-England.*

John 5. 39. *Search the Scriptures*----.

2 Tim. 3. 16, 17. *All Scripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs: That the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good works.*

BOSTON:

Printed by *J. Draper*, for T. Hancock, 1735.

THE PREFACE.

WHEN we have declar'd that Care hath been taken by comparing ſeveral Copies, to offer nothing to the Reader, which was not the genuine Product of the great Skill and Experience of that Judicious Divine the Rev. Mr. Willard; we cant ſuppoſe that this Tract, in which you have much in a little, will need Recommendation; much leſs may we preſume to imagine that any Thing written by us, ſhould add weight unto it. However, being deſired by the charitable Gentleman, who is at the Charge of the Impreſſion, with a generous Regard to the Candidates of the Miniſtry, to introduce it to the Publick; We embrace this Opportunity of expreſſing our Thankfulneſs and Joy, that theſe excellent Rules for the Study of Divinity, are made more extenſively uſeful by the Preſs, than while diſperſed in a few private Manuſcripts.

THE Knowledge of GOD in CHRIST, and of the only Way of living to Him here, ſo as to prepare for the full Enjoyment of Him in Heaven, muſt be the One Thing needful; and in ſome due Proportion, it ought to be the Care of every One to Search the Scriptures. But, whereas our Lord hath appointed an Order of Men to teach this divine Knowlege, how great ſhould be their Concern and Care to be well Inſtructed to the Kingdom of GOD themſelves, that they may be able to teach others! Now in order to this, it is a matter of the higheſt Impor-

tante that the Sons of the Prophets *enter upon this ſacred Study, under an humbling Senſe of the great Darkneſs and deep Corruption of human Nature by the Fall, and ſo with earneſt* Prayer *to* GOD, *to enlighten and purify their Minds, that they may* receive the Truth in the Love of it. Great is the Myſtery of Godlineſs. *We know but little of Bodies and created Spirits. The moſt ſagacious* Philoſophers *have not been able to ſearch out the Almighty to Perfection, in the leaſt of his Works. Certainly then, the* Miniſter of the Goſpel *muſt need the ſpecial Guidance and Influence of the Divine* SPIRIT *when looking into the Revelation which the infinite and eternal* GOD *hath made of Himſelf, and of the Way of our Redemption by* CHRIST: *for the* Carnal Mind *is not only weak, but is* Enmity againſt GOD. *However, Conſtant fervent Prayer is to accompany, not ſuperſede our diligent Endeavours in the Study of the Scriptures; that* the Man of GOD may be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good Works. *And here, tho' it is a diſtinguiſhing Favour we enjoy of having the* Bible *in our* Mother-Tongue, *yet doubtleſs it muſt be a great help to be able to read theſe ſacred Writings in the Languages in which holy Men wrote them as inſpir'd by the* HOLY GHOST: *And therefore we heartily wiſh that this Part of Academical Learning may be more and more encouraged in our* Colleges; *for if the* Candidates *have not a good Foundation of this Knowledge laid there, it will be difficult to obtain it when they come to full Employment. And further, We concur with the Rev.* Author, *that to be well-grounded in* Syſtematical Divinity, *is of excellent uſe in order to a ſafe and profitable proceeding in this Study. And as we are highly favour'd in the* Confeſſion of Faith, the Aſſemblies larger and ſhorter Catechiſms, *printed with the Scriptures under each Head; we recommend the diligent Reading of them, comparing the*

Doctrines

Doctrines delivered with the Scriptures brought to prove them. And we would here particularly recommend the Author's Expository Lectures *on the* Assemblies Shorter Catechism, *as an excellent Illustration of it.*

THE Fathers of this Country *were exemplary for their faithful and diligent Care in their Families, Schools and Churches, to propagate pure and undefiled Religion: And therefore the* Children of New-England, *and in a particular manner* the Sons of the Prophets, *are strongly obliged to remember how they have received and heard, and to hold fast those Forms of sound Words which they have been taught, when upon serious Examination, they find them consonant to the infallible* Oracles of GOD. *It's granted that our* Father in Heaven *alloweth of that* Appeal; *Nevertheless,* What saith the Scripture? *However, for any to reject parental Instruction, or those Doctrines which they have been taught in the more publick Preaching of GOD's Word, before they have, upon due Inquiry, found them disapprov'd by this* perfect Rule, *is profanely to contemn the Authority of GOD in the* Fifth Command, (*requiring Parents to* bring up their Children in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord) *and also the* divine Institution *of the Gospel Ministry; neither of which Teaching can be duly attended to Edification, without Forms of Words, and a methodical Expression & Explanation of Gospel Doctrines not* verbatim *contain'd in the* Bible: *tho' the Sense and Meaning of the Scriptures ought always to be kept to with the most religious Regard. Accordingly, here is a weighty Trust committed to Them who have the Instruction and Government of our Youth in the* Schools of the Prophets; *that they be safe Guides in leading their* Pupils *to the Study of such* Books *as explain and confirm the pure Doctrines of the Gospel, and in warning against the Errors of* such *as have a tendency, by subtle Reasoning and plausible Arguments, to corrupt their*

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tender Minds from the Simplicity that is in CHRIST: For it must be of dangerous Consequence for young Students to begin with heretical and erroneous Writers, while as yet there's just Cause to fear, lest as Children they be tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the sleight of Men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. *And doth not the present Day call aloud for the most circumspect and watchful Care in this matter? This Foundation being well laid, (and surely it must be of the greatest Importance that such as teach others, be themselves well grounded in the Faith) the Student may with more safety proceed to the Reading of* Casuistical *and* Polemical *Authors. In the whole, Let him keep his Eye fix'd on this as his chief End, the glorifying GOD in our LORD JESUS CHRIST, by the Salvation of his own, and the Souls of others. Let him therefore when call'd to Preach the Gospel, determine with the Apostle* Paul, not to know any thing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

AND now, May the GOD of all Grace pour out his SPIRIT upon our Schools, Colleges *and* Churches! *May our* Zion, *always have of her Sons, to take her by the Hand, and lead her in the Paths of Truth and Righteousness! And may these Directions which are now commended to the diligent Perusal of the Candidates of the Evangelical Ministry, be accompanied with the Divine Blessing!* O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the Years; in the midst of the Years make known; in Wrath remember Mercy. *With these humble Requests to GOD, and with Desires of the Prayers of our Fathers and Brethren in the Ministry, We subscribe,*

Joseph Sewall
Thomas Prince.

Boston, May 23. 1735.

Brief DIRECTIONS

TO A

Young Scholar

Designing the MINISTRY.

I. LET him bear in Mind that of the Apostle, James 1. 17. *Every good Gift, and every perfect Gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights.* And accordingly be much in Prayer to God for his Help.

Bene oraſſe, eſt bene ſtuduiſſe.

II. Let him put off high Opinions of himself, and be sensible of his own Infirmity. This will both put him upon more ardent Supplications: James 1. 5. *If any of you lack Wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all Men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him:* And excite him to greater Industry, 1 Cor. 3. 18. *Let no Man deceive himself: If any Man among you seemeth to be wise in this World, let him become a Fool, that he may be wise.*

III. SINCE all Theological Truths are commended to us in the WORD OF GOD, let him be much in Reading the SCRIPTURES with diligent Observance

Obſervance: This is their Commendation, 2 Tim. 3. 15. *From a Child thou haſt known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wiſe unto Salvation, thro' Faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus.* Acts 17. 11. *Theſe were more noble than thoſe in Theſſalonica, in that they received the Word with all readineſs of Mind, and ſearched the Scriptures daily, whether thoſe Things were ſo.* Acts 18.24. *A certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent Man, and mighty in the Scriptures.*

IV. In reading the Scriptures, he is firſtly concerned to underſtand the true Senſe and Meaning of them: Acts 8. 30. *And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the Prophet Eſaias, and ſaid, Underſtandeſt thou what thou readeſt?* And there are *Three* Things he is here to acquaint himſelf withal, *viz.* The *Gramatical*, the *Logical* and the *Theological* Meaning; *i.e.* The knowing of the Import of the Words, the Senſe of the Axiom, and the theological Truth contained in it. For which purpoſe, reſpecting the *two former*, it is requiſite that he be skilled in *Grammar*; eſpecially the original Languages, in which the Scriptures were dictated by the Spirit of God, and the Idioms and Criticiſms of them: In *Rhetorick*; ſince God hath ſpoken to us after our manner, and hath therefore made uſe of the vulgar Tropes and Figures, in expreſſing his Mind unto us: And *Logick*, for the analyſing of the Text, and finding out the Method of it, and the Arguments contained in it. Let him therefore keep up the Study of theſe in convenient Seaſons. And I would commend to him, the reading *Daily* of a Chapter in the *Original*, and conſulting Criticks on the Words that are obſcure, and a careful eying of the general Scope of the Text, and what Head of Arguments each particular does belong unto. In reſpect of *the laſt*, He muſt compare

Scripture

Scripture with Scripture; reduce those which are more hard to those which are more plain, and Allegorical Scriptures to such as are more intelligible; and in all Allegories make Allowances, so as not to strein every Circumstance in the Similitude; but to bring all to the *Analogy of Faith*, Rom. 12. 6. For which end,

V. Let him reduce the several Scriptures in his more *set Reading* (for it cannot be well done in a more cursory Reading, which yet is not without it's Profit) to their proper Head in Divinity. For tho' all Theological Truths be contained in the Word of God, yet they are not there digested into a *Methodical System*, but it is to be gathered from thence: And there is a *Form of wholesome Words* to be well understood and laid in the Foundation, unto which all the Word of God is accordingly to be referred; either as the Principle it self, or a Deduction from it, or an Explication of it, or an Evidence given to demonstrate it, or an Exemplification of it.

VI. Hence let his first Care be, to be well grounded in *Systematical* or *Common Place Divinity*. By this a Foundation is laid, for a safe and more profitable Proceeding to other Theological Studies: hereby he will have a Rule before him, to measure all other Things by: And for that end, let him read *the most approved Systems* and Common-Places, and get them well digested; for till he is soundly principled in the Fundamentals of Theology, he is readily expos'd to be led about by every Wind of Doctrine, and baffled with the cunning Sophisms of Impostors, against which this will be a Defence.

VII. Let him then proceed to *Casuistical Divinity*; which is for the Application of the Doctrines unto practical

Heads, since the End of *Knowledge* is *Eupraxy*, John 13. 17. And a good Skill in this, is necessary to make an able Minister of the New-Testament; who must expect to have to do with Men's Consciences, and have many a difficult and hazardous Case bro't to him for Resolution: but by this Means he will be advantaged, to practise according to his Knowledge, and preach in his Life; and be in a readiness to help others in their way, and thro' their Difficulties.

VIII. Now let him proceed to *Polemical Divinity*, or *Controversial*; that he may understand what are those Doctrines, that stand in Opposition to the Truth, and how to refute them; else he is not furnished for his Work: Tit. 1. 9. *Holding fast the faithful Word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound Doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the Gainsayers.* And this must be, by reducing all to the proper Heads in Divinity, to which they do refer; and discovering the Oppofition and Fallacy: For,

Quibus Argumentis Veritas astruitur, iisdem Falsitas destruitur.

IX. In all this, it is requisite, that he read *Authors*, whom God hath raised up in their Times, and enabled them, by those Writings, which they have commended to the World, to be helpful to those that come after them. And for his greater Safety & better Success in Reading, let me offer him *these few Rules*,

1. Let him read and study the most approved Authors in each kind, where there is least Danger of being seduced, and greatest Advantage of being seasoned with the Truth: for which let him take Advice of those that be experienced, least he spend his Time unprofitably.

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2. Let him *not pin his Faith upon the Credit or Authority of any Author*; but account all, beſides the Writers of the Holy Scriptures, fallible. The Judgment of an able Divine, may put him upon Inquiry, but muſt not ſet him down: he muſt ſee the Ground of all, and not *jurare in verba magiſtri*: elſe he will not be fit to convince others; for ſuch Authorities are no Demonſtrations.

3. Let him collect an Account of the moſt noted *Errors* and *Hereſies*, both Ancient and Modern, that have peſtered the Church of Chriſt. Thus will he be better able to diſcover them in his reading, and eſcape being infected with them at unawares, and made more curious and cautious in reading thoſe Authors where he finds them.

4. In *Reading of his own Books*, let him with Pen or Pencil, put ſignificant *Notes* of obſervable Paſſages in the *Margin*, viz.

(1.) Notable Theorems. (2.) Weighty Arguments or Reaſons for the Proof of them. (3.) Particular Caſes that are handled. (4.) Erroneous Doctrines or Aſſertions. (5.) Remarkable Inſtances or Examples in Providences referring to the Truths of God's Word. And it will be profitable to have a *ſeveral Mark*, whereby each of theſe may be diſtinguiſhed.

5. Let him after ſome conſiderable Reading, take Time to digeſt it in his *Meditation*. Not that he muſt think to carry all his Reading in his Memory; but to endeavour, that he may not loſe the Subſtance of what he has read, till he has well informed his Underſtanding about it; elſe it will be Time ſpent in reading unprofitably.

X. Let him allow ſome Time, for the Study of *Natural Philoſophy* and *Hiſtory*, eſpecially Eccleſiaſtical. Theſe have no little Utility in them for a Divine; and among other Advantages, they will be very ſerviceable to help him in the underſtanding of many Scriptures, which elſe he will be at a loſs about.

XI. Let him provide himſelf, with a large *Common-Place Book*. And that he may improve it to the beſt Advantage, take *theſe Rules*,

1. Let him write on the Head of the Page methodically, the ſeveral Subjects of Divinity, to which he may refer his reading.

2. Let him briefly note the Book and Page, where he may find that Subject particularly handled, either Doctrinally, Caſuiſtically or Polemically, in any Book which he hath in his Library.

3. Let him write at large any remarkable Paſſages, with the Book and Page.

4. Let him give a ſhort Glance at any Errors, and where he may have them confuted.

XII. Let him ſometimes exerciſe himſelf in ſome particular *Common-Place* in Divinity; chuſing an Head that may be moſt profitable.

And here,

1. To pitch upon ſome *Text* of Scripture, which moſt clearly contains it.

2. To clear up that Scripture, and the Senſe of it, and accordingly to Ground his *Theorem* upon it.

3. To

3. To open the *Terms* in it, and elucidate the meaning of the *Axiom*, and give what needful *Diſtinctions* may ſerve to determine the clear meaning of it.

4. To confirm it, by *Scripture-Arguments* and Teſtimonies.

5. To anſwer the Objections, and refute the Errors that have militated againſt it.

6. To draw the genuine *Inferences* from it, whereby He may be confirmed in other Truths which are confirmed by it.

XIII. Let him take Opportunities to *confer with Others*, eſpecially orthodox and able Miniſters, about thoſe Points that are dark and difficult, for his farther Information; remembring what is ſaid, Hoſ. 6. 3. *Then ſhall we know if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he ſhall come unto us as the Rain; as the latter and former Rain unto the Earth.*

FINIS.